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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001425

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD CHRISTIANS SAY INSURGENTS DISPLACING  
CHRISTIANS IN DOURA, COALITION PATROLS DOURA

REF: A) US ARMY NEWS RELEASE 12 04 06 B) BAGHDAD 1190

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Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT GILCHRIST, FOR REASONS  
1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During separate meetings with PolOff, three Christian contacts since April 16 have verified April 17 Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) on-line news reports that Sunni insurgents have begun a new campaign to displace Christian residents of Baghdad's Doura district. Having already driven out many Shiite residents, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)-affiliated insurgents are reportedly now beginning to drive out Christians. Contacts report that since April 4, at least eight families have left Doura after insurgents gave them the choice to convert, pay to support the insurgency, leave, or die. The contacts alleged that the insurgents' tactics include using children as spotters. On April 22, Bishop Shlemoon Wardoni, the Vice Patriarch of the Chaldean Church told PolOff that he was still seeking proof of these claims. Meanwhile, Coalition Forces in Doura have not directly observed AQI displacement of Christians, but say it is consistent with AQI's alleged, prior displacement of Shiites in Doura. The Coalition is taking steps to try to address the situation, including increasing dismounted patrols of the area. END SUMMARY.

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ANTI-CHRISTIAN THREATS IN DOURA  
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12. (C) Three Christian contacts -- who are locally hired staff from Baghdad -- informed PolOff in separate meetings that as of April 14, Sunni AQI-affiliated insurgents have issued a fatwa (religious edict) declaring that Doura is an "Islamic State". The fatwa was reportedly "announced" by the posting of paper fliers to the district's electrical poles. One Christian contact on April 16 reported that AQI has forced at least eight families from three different Doura neighborhoods -- Mu'alameen (Mahalla 830), Iskan Shabi (Mahallas 822, 824, and 826), and Mechanic (Mahallas 858 and 854) -- to leave their homes during the previous week. (Note: "Mahallas" are numbered sectors within each district. End note.) According to the contact, AQI also warned Sunni families living in the area not to interfere.

13. (C) On April 22, Bishop Shlemoon Wardoni, the Vice Patriarch of the Chaldean Church -- who has negotiated for the release of numerous Chaldean priests kidnapped for ransom -- told PolOff that that he had not been able to independently verify the existence of the fatwa and the

stories of forced displacement. He said that he had asked Doura Christians to provide him copies of the fatwa announcement, but thus far no one had done so. Wardoni argued that it was important to collect supporting evidence for the claims of victimization, adding that people sometimes exaggerate when they are afraid.

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INSURGENTS REPORTEDLY DEMAND: PAY, CONVERT, LEAVE, OR DIE  
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14. (C) One Christian contact on April 19 reported to PolOff that Sunni insurgents forced her uncle's family out of their home located in Doura's Mahalla 838, Street 58, on April 4. She said the family fled after insurgents burned the family's Western-style women's clothing in the street, and then, putting a gun to her aunt's head, gave the family the choice to convert to Islam, pay the "jizya" tax, leave, or die. The contact said that the amount the insurgents demanded for the "jizya" was 30,000 USD. (Note: "Jizya" was a tax levied on non-Muslims during early Islam. End note.) The family immediately left the home, without taking any of their belongings and is now living at another location in Baghdad. The contact asserted that some Christians believe insurgents are targeting them because they view Christians as pro-American (ref B).

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AQI SAID TO USE RADIOS, PATROL STREETS, TRAIN CHILDREN  
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15. (C) The contact reported that during the April 4 raid on her uncle's home in Mahalla 838, the insurgents used hand-held radios to take instructions from their leader -- a sheikh -- throughout the raid. She added that according to Mahalla 838 residents, the insurgents patrol the streets in cars to make sure that people are complying with their

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demands. Insurgents in Mahalla 838 reportedly rotate the license plates on three vehicles they use for their patrols -- a 1980s blue "Barazili" sedan, a 1980s red "Barazili" sedan, and a newer light blue Kia double-cabin pickup truck. The insurgents also reportedly use a Kia van, with a 10 to 15 passenger capacity, for kidnappings.

16. (C) The contact also alleged AQI is using several mosques in the vicinity of Mahalla 838 on Fridays to teach children as young as eight years old how to use weapons to combat the U.S. military. She said the names of the mosques are: Abdul Aziz, Othman, Bashir Al-Hudda, and Al-Mustafa.

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INSURGENTS SAID TO DISTRIBUTE ABAYAS, USE CHILDREN AS SPOTTERS  
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17. (C) Another Christian contact, on April 18 reported to PolOff that a woman from a Sunni family now occupying her home in Doura's Mahalla 826, Street 17, told her recently that the "mujahudeen" are now going door-to-door to distribute black gloves, socks, and abayas for women to wear. The same woman said the insurgents have implemented a rule prohibiting women from using cell phones in public.

18. (C) The contact added that the insurgents were using children as spotters to obtain information on the families that they were targeting in Doura and identify locations that Coalition Forces frequent in order to plant bombs in those places. Meanwhile, the local residents -- including Sunnis -- are reportedly too intimidated to say anything when they see insurgents installing improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The source commented that the insurgents are good-looking, well-dressed young men, who sometimes wear white and black patterned head-dresses when conducting operations; however, she was unable to comment on their number. She assessed that someone is paying them and

providing them equipment.

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FIRST THE SHIITES, NOW THE CHRISTIANS  
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¶9. (C) The Christian contacts noted that the Sunni insurgents had previously driven out or killed the Shiites living in certain areas of Doura and that the campaign against Christians appeared to be the next phase of a plan to rid the district of its non-Sunni population. For example, one contact reported that the insurgents had already forced Shiites out of Iskan Shabi (Mahallas 822, 824, and 826). The Christian contact that left her home in Mahalla 826, Street 17, stated that she fled after finding the corpse of Shiite man at her doorstep in December 2006.

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COALITION ASSESSMENT/INITIATIVES IN DOURA  
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¶10. (S) Coalition commanders in Doura cannot confirm these specific accounts of intimidation and are not aware of Christian enclaves in the referenced mahallas. Therefore, the Coalition assesses the accounts may be from isolated Christians in Sunni neighborhoods. At the same time, however, the Coalition notes that an AQI campaign against Christians in Doura would be consistent with AQI's previous history of forcing the displacement of Shiite residents from the area. The Coalition assesses that such intimidation will likely increase in the near term, particularly with the planned departure of Coalition Forces from the Combat Outpost (COP) located at the Chaldean seminary in Doura at the end of May -- at the request of the Chaldean Church (ref B).

¶11. (S-NOFORN) In order to continue protecting the residents of Doura, the Coalition is exploring alternate COP sites near the seminary, increasing dismounted patrols in the mahallas, and conducting Human Intelligence (HUMINT) operations to improve understanding of the local population. For example, the Coalition initiated Operation "Close Encounters" designed to identify systematically residents of each neighborhood and determine occupied/unoccupied residences. This operation strives to improve the Coalition's understanding of the dynamics within the mahallas, as well as to target potential insurgent caches, possibly based in deserted homes.

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COMMENT  
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¶12. (C) At this time, Post cannot verify that there is a large-scale AQI campaign in Doura to target Christians exclusively. Post is attempting to collect specific information on the location and nature of insurgent activity in Doura to help the Coalition military units that patrol Doura focus their efforts. Post will continue to seek information from Christians able and willing to provide evidence to validate allegations of intimidation. END COMMENT.  
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